

Layers of Painting. The Surface Techniques of Stephanie Jünemann.

by Knut Ebeling

A painting, like knowledge, is marked by the belief that it originates from the depth of time or from the interior of subjectivity: Time carries with it the forms employed by the painter; subjectivity provides the depth with which the painter anchors him- or herself in time. Together they constitute the illusion of a painting, underneath the surface of which we could recognize meaning - a meaning which was as visible as its coming into being was invisible. What marks the difference between a painting of layers from a painting of depth is the simultaneity of formation and transference. Just as all that which we interpret as tradition, as meaning, as history is more due to the act and coding of transference than to the reality of history - that is to say due to that which is synchronous and simultaneous and what we might call a layer - all that which is being revealed in the works of Jünemann can be considered as a product of its layers. A layered painting reverses the relationship between depth and surface, of presentation and information. We are not presented with a deep meaning which has been produced by an invisible process. Only the process of fabrication is visible. There is no meaning.

The production process, which is purely external appearance, replaces the inspiration of creation, which used to be mere inwardness. Just as it is true for minimalism, the painting is identical with the process of its production: an image of the moment, and not of timelessness.

In a first step, the layers of Jünemanns paintings can be defined technically. Her latest painting are made on sandwich plates, which are already layered. Therefore the layers of her painting are not any type of absolute or definite surface, but rather continuation of a layer. Here her work differs from minimalism. Plastic is followed by hard foam, then again by plastic, then by acrylic paint. But Jünemann does not simply add on one layer to the next, letting the painting arise from an addition of layers. Her paintings are also constructed by a specific subtraction of certain segments of coloured layers. As soon as one layer has been put on, a part of the one underneath is being revealed. Just as an archaeologist who exposes layers, she proceeds from the top to the bottom, thereby revealing not just certain coloured surfaces, but layers of colour. And just as the archaeological method produced a

different approach to history - suddenly it was considered as a sequence of discontinuous layers, and no longer as a continuous process - these layers of colour produce a new visual knowledge of painting.

It is the visible layering of information, and not simply following predecessors in art history, that defines visual information. For example: that what used to be, is and will be understood by the term *painting* is not being determined by a permanent definition of the term, but by a contemporary constellation - a specific layer - which is defined by its lack of definition. Stephanie Jünemann's paintings do not address this indetermination by presenting what might be called a painting one day. She addresses this indetermination by presenting its structure. She does not display a digital or virtual image, but she shows that images may be digital or virtual. She exposes the fact that paintings are layers.

The visual information in Jünemann's layers is not any kind of meaning hidden behind the painting that might determine it. What can be grasped is visual information which is being produced in the process of painting. This information cannot be separated from the process of its production. Her paintings generate information that does not originate from any sort of depth but which constitutes itself in and with the painted layers. We do not see meaning as being transferred from the depth of one subjectivity to another. Instead we see the process of production, of creation, the tools of painting inscribing themselves simultaneously onto the surface of the painting, - and no origin. A surface is being followed by a ridge and by an edge. This painting of external appearance is defined by its material, by acrylic paint, by plastic tiles, by the tracing of a squeegee, and by the trembling of the hand.

There is a parallel between visual information and information we consider as having been passed on to us. What we utter as a result of our belief in a certain knowledge handed down to us is not the timelessness of tradition, but a fragile contemporaneity of the utterance itself. Jünemann's paintings resemble the undefined forms of water meeting land. You can see the bottom. In this process of making things visible, knowledge is the term authorizing the ephemeral and attesting to that which disappears. What we call knowledge is not something locked into a capsule that is or can be passed on in an unchanged fashion. What we call knowledge does only come into being at the moment of its passing - and disappears with it, like an opened capsule or like water on the beach.

Translation: S. Kershner